



NEBRASKA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

THE TOP 10 AUTISM FACTS & MYTHS

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY
FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION
SERVICES



FACT OR MYTH?

1

**“AUTISM IS A
MEDICAL
DIAGNOSIS – NOT
SOMETHING WE
EVALUATE FOR IN
SCHOOLS”**

MYTH

A medical diagnosis is NOT required for a child to be eligible for special education services in the autism disability category.

While many states do require documentation of a medical diagnosis, Nebraska does not. A child may have an educational verification of Autism irrespective of any medical diagnosis.

Fact ☒
Check

DIAGNOSIS VS. VERIFICATION

A medical diagnosis is usually given by a doctor or clinical psychologist. The diagnosis is guided by criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-5 and based on a medical model.

Educational Verification is a process conducted by a school district to determine if a student has a disability and to plan appropriate services to address the student's individual needs. The verification reflects assessments done by a multidisciplinary team. Verification is based on an educational model.

STATE DEFINITION OF AUTISM (92 NAC 51.006.04B)

To qualify for special education services in the category of autism the child must have a developmental disability which significantly affects verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, is generally evident before age three, and that affect the child's educational performance.

THREE PART ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT

1. Meet verification criteria (92 NAC 51.006.04B)
2. Documentation: Adverse Effect on Educational Performance
3. Determination: Need for Special Education Services

WILL DSM-5 HAVE AN IMPACT ON SCHOOL VERIFICATIONS?

The short answer is no. It won't change how we do educational verifications or the process of determining eligibility for special education services.

It will however change the criteria and categories for a medical diagnosis.

The new criteria for diagnosing autism represent a substantial change from the current version, established by the DSM-IV in 1994. Changes include the removal of the diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome and the addition of a social communication disorder. The medical diagnosis category will now be called autism spectrum disorders.

NE ASD Network 2013

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2 "AUTISM ONLY EFFECTS BOYS"

MYTH

- Females can and do have autism spectrum disorder
- The typical ratio of males to females is 4 or 5:1
- Girls are diagnosed at later ages than are boys



REASONS FOR THE LOWER RATIO OF FEMALES WITH ASD:

- Fewer females referred for assessment because display better expression of emotions and exhibit less anger and physical aggression
- Camouflage: females are more passive and skilled at using modeling and imitation. They can hide their difficulties better
- Peer mentors: Girls with AS are more likely to be "mothered" by their female peers

Attwood & Grandin (2006). Asperger's and Girls.

3 "AN INDIVIDUAL WITH AUTISM CAN HAVE OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS OR DISABILITIES"

FACT

Individuals with ASD can have two or more co-morbid conditions. These can include mental health, medical conditions, or other developmental disabilities.

**This is referred to as dual diagnosis, comorbidity, or having co-existing conditions.

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**“A CHILD HAS TO BE
A CERTAIN AGE
BEFORE THE
SCHOOL SHOULD
DO AN AUTISM
EVALUATION”**

MYTH

Research shows that early intervention has a significant impact in development for children with Autism.

At any age if there are concerns that a child is not developing appropriate social and communication skills, those concerns should be discussed with professionals for consideration of a referral.

EARLY INTERVENTION PART C SERVICES

All children referred for Part C services (birth to age three) will be evaluated to determine their eligibility as a child with **Developmental Delay**.

**If autism is suspected, the child should be verified under the disability category Developmental Delay but the characteristics of ASD should be noted in the MDT reports and discussed with parents during the MDT meeting.

5 “IF A PARENT REQUESTS AN INITIAL EVALUATION BUT THE DISTRICT DOESN'T SUSPECT AUTISM- NO EVALUATION IS NEEDED”

MYTH

- Parents can request an initial evaluation and/or a re-evaluation
- The regular SAT process should be followed for all school aged children – but should be done in an efficient manner...

Consistent with the consent requirements in 92 NAC 51-009.08A, a parent of a child, the Nebraska Department of Education, another State agency or a local school district or approved cooperative or nonpublic school may initiate a request for an initial evaluation to determine if the child is a child with a disability.

Rule 51

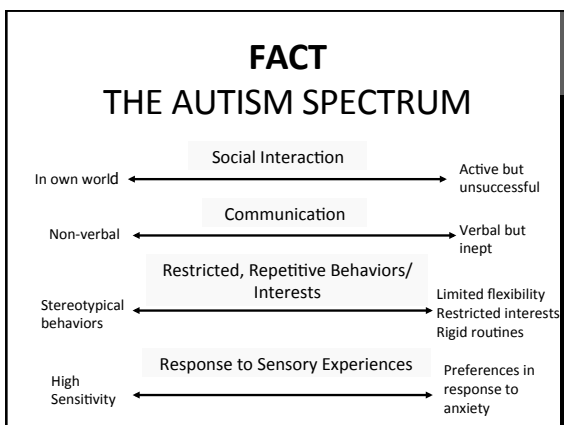
6
**“THE ADOS 2 IS A
 REQUIRED
 ASSESSMENT FOR
 ALL AUTISM
 EVALUATIONS”**

MYTH

- There is no one tool that must be part of an autism evaluation
- The ADOS 2 is not a required part of an educational verification of autism
- The ADOS 2 is an excellent assessment tool that should be used on an individual basis as determined by the MDT team

006.0025: School districts must ensure a variety of assessment tools and strategies are used...

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**“IF YOU’VE SEEN
 ONE CHILD WITH
 AUTISM – YOU’VE
 SEEN ONE CHILD
 WITH AUTISM...”**



8
**“IF SOMEONE FROM
THE DISTRICT ISN’T
TRAINED... THE
SCHOOL DOESN’T
HAVE TO PROVIDE
AN EVALUATION”**

MYTH

- School districts are responsible for determining eligibility of students suspected of having a disability.
- The ASD Network can provide assistance to teams needing support doing autism evaluations.
- Providers can contact the regional ASD Coordinator to discuss assessment tools and other assessment related resources and trainings.

9
**“STUDENTS WHO
GET GOOD GRADES
DON’T HAVE AUTISM
OR NEED SPECIAL
EDUCATION”**

MYTH

*To qualify for special education services in the category of autism the child must have a developmental disability which significantly affects verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, is generally evident before age three, and that **affect the child's educational performance.***

****The courts have repeatedly shown that social skills and functional skills are educationally relevant.**

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**“MANY SCHOOL
DISTRICTS IN
NEBRASKA ARE
DOING EXCELLENT,
COMPREHENSIVE,
AUTISM
EVALUATIONS”**

FACT

- Many districts across the state are providing comprehensive, thorough assessments to determine eligibility (or not) for individuals under the autism disability category.
- Individual providers and teams continue to seek training and expertise on ASD assessments.
- Many individuals in educational settings are now providing training and assistance to others in best practice ASD assessments.
